

**FARMINGTON SELECT BOARD**

**Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

**The conduct of the meeting included remote access by telephone, video, and electronic means. The public could attend in person or by viewing the live stream at <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-streamfarmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> or calling 578-7395.**

Chairman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Stephen Bunker, Joshua Bell, Byron Staples, and Dennis O’Neil. Police Chief Kenneth Charles, Planning Assistant Cindy Gelinis, Stephen Eldridge, Interim Town Manager, Leah Giusti, Executive Assistant, MBTV Camera Operator, and members of the press and members of the public were also present. Members of the press and public participated remotely as authorized by PL 209, c.617.

**ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag**

Chairman Matthew Smith led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**ITEM 6: To review and sign Town Manager Employment Agreement**

The Board moves Item 6 up in order to introduce the new Town Manager, Erica LaCroix. It has been a long process to find the right candidate and they are very happy with the results.

Ms. LaCroix stated that she is excited to come on board. She knows Dick Davis and stated that she has big shoes to fill. Leaving town with wonderful staff in Winslow, but Farmington is a great town. She considers this a big step forward and is looking forward to the opportunity.

Mr. Bunker stated that Ms. LaCroix has met with department heads and knows our community and department heads worked for a long time without someone in the corner office. He is pleased that the time was well worth it. Thrilled to have her. Her start date is December 13, 2023.

**Selectman Bell made a motion to sign; Selectman O’Neil seconded.**

**VOTE                      AFFIRMATIVE                      5                      MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 2: To hold a Public Hearing regarding proposed changes to the following Ordinances:**

- **Site Review Ordinance**
- **Subdivision Ordinance**
- **Licenses Ordinance**

Chairman Smith opens the public hearing. Cindy – state mandated addition to the ordinances.

Smith closes the public hearing and brings it back to the board.



**ITEM 4: To review Application for Renewal of On-Premises License for Sabaidee Thai Restaurant**

**Selectman Bunker made a motion to approve the Application for Renewal of On-Premises License for Sabaidee Thai Restaurant; Selectman Staples seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 5: To review Application for On-Premises License for Sushi & Thai Smile Restaurant**

The Selectboard reviewed the application. It appears this is for a new license, not a renewal and there is information missing.

**Selectman Bell made a motion to table the application until such time as a public hearing is scheduled and more information is presented; Selectman Smith seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 7: To review the Board of Appeals application of Richard M. Morton**

**Selectman Bunker made a motion to approve the Board of Appeals application of Richard M. Morton; Selectman Bell seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 8: To review the Zoning Board application of Jennifer Bjorn**

**Selectman Smith made a motion to approve the Zoning Board application for Jennifer Bjorn; Selectman Staples seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 9: To review Agreement for Town Attorney Services with Preti Flaherty**

The Board reviewed the agreement. Mr. Eldridge states that the attorneys would like to come to a meeting and introduce themselves to the Board.

**Selectman Smith made a motion to approve the Agreement for Town Attorney Services with Preti Flaherty; Selectman Bunker seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 10: To hear from James Cote regarding the High Peak National Wildlife Refuge**

James Cote approached the board. This past Spring, Fish & Wildlife proposed a 200,000 acre wildlife refuge between Weld and Flagstaff Lake. Their opposition is not to conservation, rather injecting Federal ownership into the economy. Recreational access will be altered over time. Commitments they make today can be changed down the road. They want to see these areas grow with conservation, but not in the form of a Federal refuge. There are already 90,000 acres in conservation in Franklin County. They would prefer local control. Mr. Cote circulates a letter to the Select Board. Senators Collins and King, Congressman Golden, and Governor Mills have come out against the Federal refuge. Sugarloaf and other forest companies have signed onto the letter already.

Selectman Bell inquires as to why they want a refuge in this area. They speculate that it is due to the government's 30/30 plan – 30% of land in conservations within the next 30 years. Selectman Bell asks how many landowners would be affected. Mr. Cote stated likely hundreds, including Sugarloaf, Saddleback, and Tribal Lands.

**Selectman Smith made a motion to support the letter against national refuge; Selectman Bell seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 11: To Approve the Minutes of 9/12/23**

**Selectman Bell made a motion to approve the minutes of 9/12/23; Selectman Smith seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED**

**ITEM 12: To Discuss Other Business**

Mr. Eldridge informed the Board that the Kyes Insurance agent, Flint Christie came into the office today with the updated insurance premiums. There has been a 14% increase over last year. Selectman Staples inquired about litigation insurance. Mr. Eldridge will ask Mr. Christie Selectman Bell asked about bidding out for insurance. Mr. Eldridge stated that it was not bid out, the Town has been with this company for 30 years. However, it is always prudent to look around. MMA can be very competitive.

The Board would like to see tax rate scenarios from Dirigo Assessing at the next Board meeting.

With regard to Public Works mowing, the mowing has been contracted out. Previously, they would rent a machine from HP Fairfield, but they no longer offer that service.

With regard to the revaluation to be done by KRT, Mr. Eldridge has not heard anything from them, and he will reach out.

Selectman O'Neil is looking for clarification on nepotism in the personnel policy. Selectman

Smith stated that it is a town manager issue. Mr. Eldrige brought it up with Mr. Hutchins but will follow up and ensure that we are adhering to the policy. Aileen Kennedy mentioned to the board that there have been other instances where relatives were not employed due to the policy. Selectman Smith stated that he will not listen to accusations when people are not here to defend themselves.

**Selectman Bell made a motion to adjourn at 7:42 p.m.; Selectman O'Neil seconded.**

**VOTE            AFFIRMATIVE            5            MOTION CARRIED**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Leah Giusti.

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Byron Staples - Secretary